The Patent Borax Co. Ltd.

BIRMINGHAM,
TIPTON AND LONDON.

1874—1924

SOME RECORD OF THE YEARS
THAT LIE BETWEEN.

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PATENT BORAX Co.

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1874 —— 1924.

The Record of half-a-Century of Progress.

ORIGIN.

LUDGATE HILL.

THIS year marks the Fiftieth Anniversary of the establishment of the industry, founded originally on the chance discovery of the unique antiseptic properties of Borax.

The history of the business — commenced in quite a small way by Mr. Arthur Robottom, an old-time commercial prospector, whose visit to the borate land of Southern California in 1873 opened his eyes to the remarkable preserving qualities of Boron — and whose fac-simile signature still to-day guarantees the genuineness of the "Californian" packet — through the fifty years of its development which have resulted from the application of Borax to the great variety of household, laundry, toilet and industrial preparations now manufactured, supplies an interesting romance of trade.

EARLY DAYS.

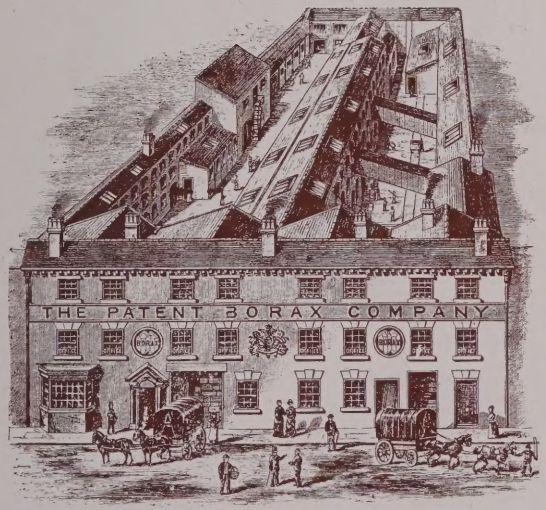
The industry was originally started in the year 1874 by Mr. Arthur Robottom in premises at 34, Ludgate Hill, Birmingham, to manufacture

JESSE ASCOUGH—

FOUNDER OF
THE PATENT
BORAX COMPANY

A Captain of Industry—
whose business life was
an inspiration to all those
privileged to know him

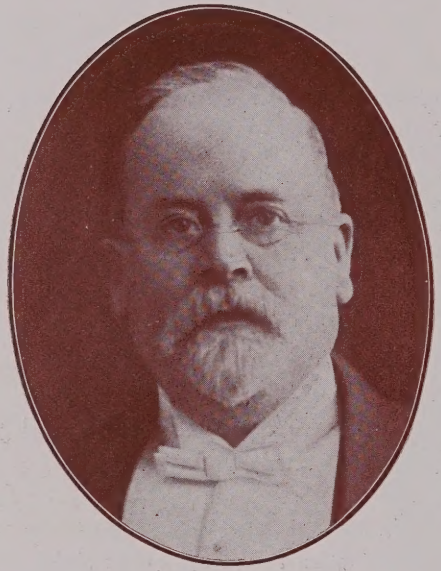
the new discovery "Robottom's Pure Californian Borax" and in 1876 The Borax Company Ltd. was registered to purchase such business as a going concern, and to acquire certain Patents for Improvements in the manufacture of Soap, Soap Powders, Antiseptic, Preserving, and Disinfecting Compounds. The familiar Borax Crystal Trade Mark was first introduced and copyrighted on a variety of labels, which included Borax (Patent) Dry Soap in January, 1875.



NEWMARKET STREET

In June, 1876, the Company removed to larger premises in Newmarket Street, Birmingham, and between the years 1876-1878 various products were manufactured and brought before the public under distinctive titles and labels which were duly copyrighted. It is interesting to recall that in these early days the work of milling, packing, and dispatch was performed largely by one family — an old-school general utility man, his wife, daughters, sons, and son-in law.

In July, 1878, the Borax Company Ltd. was voluntarily liquidated, and the effects, with Patent and all other rights, came into the hands of Mr. Jesse Ascough of Handsworth (September 3rd, 1878). The coyprights, trade marks, and other rights were transferred to Mr. J. Ascough by Mr. A. Robottom on the 26th August, 1879, and from this time, under the title of The Patent Borax Company, the record of the business is one of continuous development.



WILLIAM B. PARKER—

Manager 1878-1895
Director 1893-1908

FREDERICK W. ARCHER—

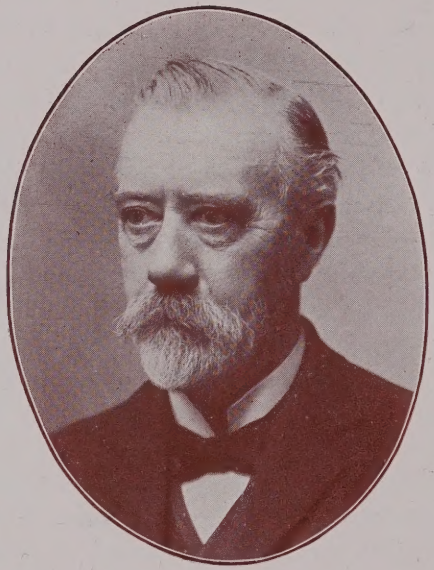
Entered the service of the Company as Junior Clerk in 1882;
Appointed Secretary 1893; Manager 1895;
Managing Director from 1897 to 1903

With a shrewd perception of the value of combining such a wonderful antiseptic as borax with soaps and washing materials generally, Mr. J. Ascough applied his energies to experiment, research, and perfection of processes. Many of the trade marks and labels as still used were registered in the years 1878-1886, not only in Great Britain but in the British Colonies and foreign countries. It may well be said that the foundations of the business were well and truly laid during the early days of Mr. Jesse Ascough's control. In him was combined both the scientific and the commercial mind, and, realising that the growth of the business must depend on public appreciation of the products, he devoted practically all the profits of the early years to making them familiar, using all forms of advertisement. Between 1876 and 1886 many thousands of pounds were expended in bringing Borax Preparations before the public.

HIGH HOLBORN.

Jesse Ascough was a man of unbounded energy, who took joy and pride in achievement, and, withal, a gentleman in its truest sense. He possessed the happy knack of inspiring by precept and example to best endeavour, and by his kindly nature endeared himself to all his workers. The men holding positions of responsibility in the business who were associated with him in Newmarket Street would be the first to admit the debt they owe to his training.

HENRY T. WILLIS—
Director 1897 to 1916



ARTHUR J. BUNCHER—
Director and Chairman 1897 to 1918

RICHARD D. HAYDEN—
Director 1893 to 1913

The first manager of the Company was Mr. W. B. Parker worthy second to the founder in energy and capability, true type of the keen business man, not easily tolerant of mistakes, and always unmistakably the manager.

Contrasting the present-day methods of production with the primitive means employed is an object lesson in enterprise.

Recollection of the grinding mill at Newmarket Street brings the picture of dim figures working in clouds of biting dust. The sieving was done in open shaking sieves, and the men worked with mouth and nose swathed in a protecting muffler. Amongst the toughest of the tough were these old-timers.

The works in Newmarket Street were a conversion of old tenement houses in a district of slums, long since swept away. The earliest transport was a basket carriage. At the beginning of 1880 the work-people numbered 16, the office staff 4, and the travelling staff 3.

AND SO TO LADYWOOD.

The business, fostered by judicious publicity, grew, and the next succeeding years show a record of added hands and augmented staff until Newmarket Street became a crowded hive of industry. All forms of publicity were consistently employed and the Company's productions were displayed at numerous Exhibitions throughout the world, where gold medals and highest honours for excellence to the number of thirty-four were gained. At the Chicago Exhibition in 1893 a special award was given "for originating a new branch of industry."

THOMAS H. ADAMS –
Chairman and
Managing Director

Entered the service of the Company
in February, 1884, when a boy;
Appointed London Manager 1897;
General Manager 1903;
Director 1913; Chairman 1918

Increasing difficulty in dealing with the growing trade necessitated removal to more commodious premises, and in the year 1893 the present works, occupying a floor area of two acres, were leased and converted to the manufacturing requirements of the business.

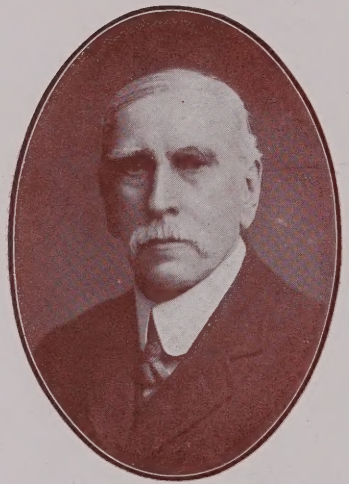
Planned on model lines the packing-room will bear comparison with any other of its kind in the kingdom, while due regard was paid to the comfort of the hands by the provision of a spacious mess and recreation room. An arm of the canal runs into the works which enables much of the inwards and outwards traffic to be water conveyed.

——— LIMITED.

Shortly after the establishment in the new premises the business was converted into a Limited Company (November, 1893) with Mr. J. Ascough as Chairman and Managing Director, and Mr. W. B. Parker, Mr. R. D. Hayden, and Mr. F. W. Archer as first Directors.

In March, 1895, "Borax House" was opened at 129, High Holborn, London, as a depot and showroom. Jesse Ascough died on the 11th April, 1897, to the great regret of all associated with the business he had controlled for nearly twenty years. Mr. F. W. Archer, who had been appointed Manager on the resignation of Mr. W. B. Parker, in 1895, was appointed to succeed him as Managing Director, and Mr. Arthur J. Buncher and Mr. Henry T. Willis were elected Directors, with Mr. A. J. Buncher as Chairman.

In August, 1897, the Company was honoured by Royal Appointment as Borax Makers to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, which Warrant was renewed by His Majesty King Edward VII in June, 1901, and by his present Majesty, King George V in 1910.



JOSEPH H. HETHERINGTON –

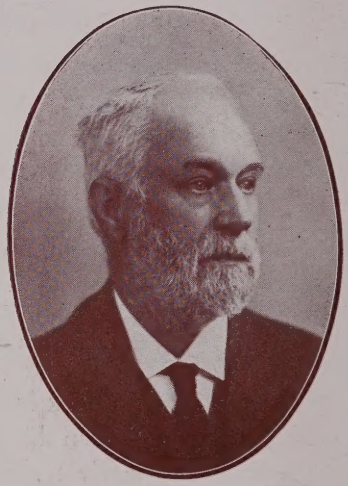
Director ;

Elected in 1913

JOHN J. ARMSTRONG –

Director and Secretary ;

Entered the service of Mr. J. Ascough in 1890 ; Appointed Secretary 1903 : Elected Director 1917



CHARLES HODGKINSON—

Director ;

Elected in 1921

In 1898 an important progressive step was taken by the installation of plant for the refining of Borax from the crude imported material.

In May, 1902, the London depot was transferred to premises at Wharf Road, E.C. These premises, being on the City canal basis, provided facilities for direct water transport from Birmingham works, and enabled a quick delivery service in the London area to be maintained.

Mr. F. W. Archer's management of the business was ended in February, 1903 by his untimely death at the early age of 37. During the years of his management the forward policy had been vigorously pursued, extensive publicity had been consistently maintained, and many improvements in manufacture had been effected. The growing popularity of the Company's products had incited constantly increasing competition, and in several cases it had been found necessary to restrain imitators.

Mr. T. H. Adams was brought from the management of London depot to become General Manager of the Company, and Mr. J. J. Armstrong, who had occupied the position of confidential clerk to the successive Managing Directors, was appointed Secretary.

In March, 1903, a central City Office was taken at King William Street.

Mr. J. H. IMMS—Chief Ledger Clerk ;
Entered the service of the Company in 1887

Mr H. FIDDIAN—Cashier ;
Entered the service of the Company in 1888

Mr. F. J. SCULLY—Dispatch Dept.
Entered the service of the Company in 1902

Mr. W. H. STANWELL—
London Representative ;
Entered the service of the Company in 1895

Mr. A. LAWES—
Liverpool District Representative ;
Entered the service of the Company in 1892

Mr. J. THORP—
London Representative ;
Entered the service of the Company in 1898

In the year 1908 an improved method of packing was effected by the adoption of packeting machines. Up till this time the powdered soaps had all been packed by hand, a slow process with mould and stick. The three machines installed were each capable of turning out 30 packets per minute. It is interesting to note that the three original machines, with improvements, are working satisfactorily in the battery to-day.

In this year Mr. W. B. Parker, owing to conflicting interests, resigned his position as Director.

The development of the business was steadily pursued, advantage being taken of up-to-date methods of manufacture and improvements in system. Additional lines, resulting from research work in the laboratories, were added to the Price List, new patents were taken out and new trade marks registered. In face of growing competition the record was one of steady progress.

Mr. T. H. Adams was elected a Director in the year 1913 in which year Mr. J. H. Hetherington succeeded Mr. R. D. Hayden on the Board.

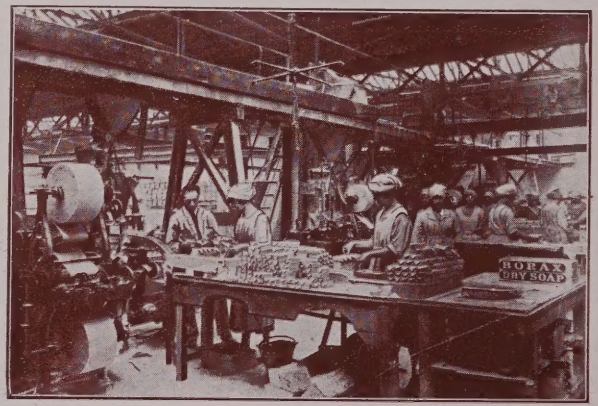
Mr. J. WHITEHEAD.

THE WAR.

The war period imposed a strain on the management which remains an unfading memory. The works were largely depleted of male labour by the volunteering and calling-up of the eligibles, and great difficulty was experienced in obtaining workers, necessitating the employment of Belgian refugees and other aliens. The large increase of business, in face of labour shortage, prompted an urgency call to the staff, and most loyally did all concerned respond. Restricted supplies of material necessitated a system of rationing, but all the business possible was done, and for months the lights were burning in the works until a late hour. The difficulties as they arose were surmounted, and at the armistice the organization was speedily restored to the normal.

Regretted by all who had learned to esteem him for his sterling worth and kindly nature Mr. H. T. Willis died on the 21st June, 1916, after nineteen years' service on the Board, and in February of the following year Mr. J. J. Armstrong was elected a Director.

Mr. A. J. Buncher, who had been Chairman of the Company for 21 years, died suddenly on the 22nd October, 1918. In close association with the founder and with the management Mr. Buncher's interest in the welfare of the business was of the



A CORNER OF THE PACKING ROOM.

keenest. He was in every way a worthy successor to the first Chairman. The vacant chair was filled by Mr. T. H. Adams.

The year 1919 marked an important development in the acquisition of Soap Works at Tipton for the manufacture, primarily, of the base used in the soap powders. The capacity of the plant was speedily enlarged, and the variety of soaps now made at Tipton constitutes a goodly proportion of the total production. Adjoining land for development has been added, and the future should show a great extension of this side of the business. In Mr. J. Foulkes, the Tipton Works Manager, the Company have a Soap specialist second to none in ability, who is satisfied with nothing short of excellence.

Mr. J. FOULKES
Works Manager: Tipton.

In February of the year 1921 Mr. Charles Hodgkinson was elected to a seat on the Board. Combined with a wide commercial experience, gained in his profession as a Chartered Accountant, Mr. Hodgkinson possessed intimate knowledge of the business, having been auditor for some years prior to its incorporation. His son, Mr. Norman Hodgkinson, the present auditor, was elected in succession.

JAMES ARMSTRONG—
The Veteran Foreman;

Entered the service of the Company in December, 1877

ALICE PHILLIPS—
Head Forewoman;

Entered the service of the Company in 1882

Since the termination of the war the Company have, as far as possible, employed ex-service disabled men, and are on the King's Roll.

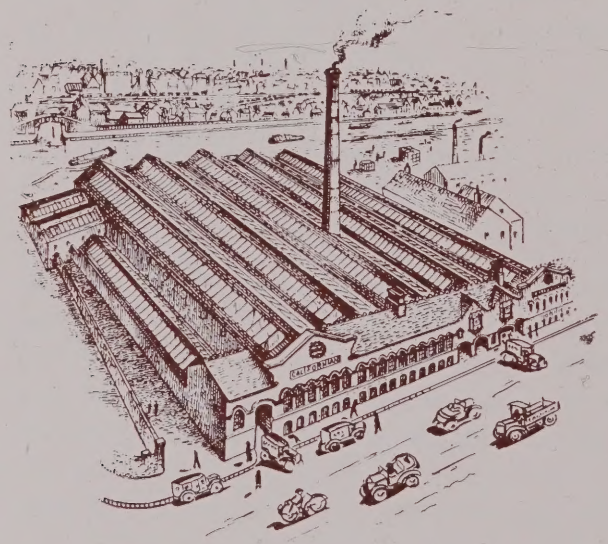
Moving with the times, the year 1922 saw a conversion of the motive power from gas to electricity.

In January, 1923, a Staff Benefit Fund, controlled by Trustees jointly appointed by the Directors and Staff, was inaugurated on a contributory basis, the Company supplementing all subscriptions by a 50% addition.

This Year was marked by a visit to the works of Dr. John Robertson, Medical Officer for the City of Birmingham, who was afforded every opportunity to inspect processes and examine the employees. He reported that all the workpeople examined were healthy, and that none had been in any way adversely affected by their work during their years of employment.

The present year shows a step in the progressive development of Tipton works by the installation of a Glycerine producing plant of much increased capacity. The productions of the Company, widely distributed and universally familiar, have earned a well-merited name for excellence. When grandmother was a girl the little blue packet was known to her; the crystal trade mark stood then as now for the seal of quality. Half-a-century of progress finds the management to-day, stimulated by past achievement, keenly alive to the possibilities of further development, and, backed by the unflagging efforts of a loyal staff, they look forward to the future with the confidence begotten of pride in a good name and of a record of unqualified success.

Cordial goodwill has been the animating spirit between the management and the employees — that good understanding which keeps the wheels running smoothly — from the inception of the business. Records of long service, both of individual members of the staff, departmental heads, and of the hands are numerous, eloquent testimony to the pleasant relationship which has always existed.



WORKS: LADYWOOD.

In the indoor staff may be enumerated :—

Mr. H. FIDDIAN — Cashier — 36 years' service ;

Mr. JAMES IMMS — Chief Ledger Clerk — 37 years' service ;

Mr. F. J. SCULLY — Dispatch Department — 22 years.

In the outside staff may be mentioned : —

Mr. W. H. STANWELL — 29 years' service ;

Mr. A. LAWES — 32 years' service ;

Mr. JOHN THORP — 26 years' service.

In this connection it is interesting to note that Mr. J. Whitehead — one of the Company's earliest representatives — whose term of service

dates back to 1885 — retired in the year 1922. Mr. Whitehead was well-known on the road as "a rare worker" and was held in the highest esteem by all associated with him. In the works may be noted :—

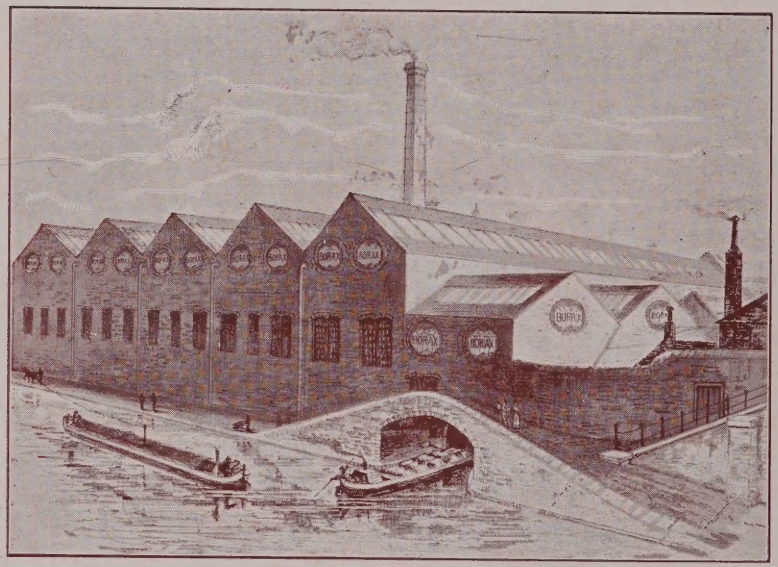
Mr. J. ARMSTRONG — the veteran foreman — with a record of 47 years.

Miss ALICE PHILLIPS — head forewoman — with service of 42 years.

"OLD HANDS."

Others worthy of mention are :—

Mrs. HEMBROUGH	...	45 years
Miss L. MIDWINTER	...	40 years
,, C. WILMOT	...	39 years
,, L. ALDRIDGE	...	29 years
Mr. C. PAGE ...	...	42 years
,, T. WINTERS ...	...	41 years
,, N. CURTIS ...	...	35 years
,, H. WALLACE	...	34 years
,, F. PRICE ...	...	33 years
,, F. HUBAND ...	...	32 years
,, G. WALKER ...	...	31 years
,, I. MILLARD ...	...	24 years
,, G. RAY ...	...	24 years
,, W. GROOM ...	...	20 years



WORKS: LADYWOOD.

ROYAL LETTERS PATENT
UNDER
SEAL
BORAX
QUEEN OF ENGLAND
EMPRESS OF INDIA
PATENTS
AWARDS
EXHIBITIONS
EUROPE. ASIA. AFRICA. AMERICA. AUSTRALASIA
ITALY
THE GREAT SEAL
OF ENGLAND
GERMANY
VICTORIA
SWEDEN
FRANCE
TASMANIA GOLD MEDAL
BIRMINGHAM 1886
CANADA
TASMANIA HIGHEST AWARD

BORAX